



HON. LESLIE C. NICHOLS (Ret.)

Mediator • Arbitrator • Referee



Your Partner in Resolution

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AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Personal & Catastrophic Injury, Wrongful Death
- Complex Litigation
- Insurance Coverage & Bad Faith
- Land Use, CEQA, and Real Estate
- Business & Contract Disputes
- Consumer Cases
- Professional Liability
- Civil Rights
- Probate, Estates & Trusts

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara

1984-2009

Judge Nichols served as a Judge of the Superior Court for 25 years, handling settlement conferences, and pre-trial, trial, and post-trial matters involving civil law, family law, juvenile delinquency and dependency, probate and mental health, and criminal law.

Over the course of his judicial career, Judge Nichols has presided over court and jury proceedings in complex litigation and CEQA; served in family court for four years, including a term as Presiding Judge of the Family Court Division; served as Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court for two years, and later as Presiding Judge of the Appellate Department; sat on assignment by the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court; spent two years in civil law and motion; was Supervising Judge of the family resources division; and spent one year in criminal law and motion.

Judge Nichols served as Assistant Presiding Judge of the Santa Clara County Superior Court, followed by two elected terms as Presiding Judge from 1997 and 1998. As Presiding Judge, he oversaw the unification of the Superior and Municipal trial courts in Santa Clara County.

Following his retirement from the bench in 2009, Judge Nichols served in the Assigned Judges Program until joining ADR Services, Inc. in 2019 as a full-time mediator, arbitrator, and referee.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Trial and Appellate Attorney

1967-1984

Judge Nichols spent the first two years of his legal career as a Staff Attorney with the San Mateo County Legal Aid Society. Thereafter, he transitioned to private practice, maintaining a general trial and appellate practice in the law partnership of Nichols & Ambler. His work focused primarily on civil, family, and criminal matters heard in State courts, with a lesser portion of his cases heard in Federal courts. He tried over forty cases to verdict or judgment, in addition to handling countless pre- and post-trial matters along with a smaller number of administrative hearings and arbitrations.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Council Member, Vice-Mayor and Mayor, City of Mountain View

1977-1984

Judge Nichols served as a member of the Mountain View City Council from 1977 until his appointment to the bench in 1984. His service began in 1977 by council appointment, after a public review process, to fill a vacancy. He was reelected in contested elections in 1978 and 1982.

EDUCATION

University of California, Hastings College of the Law, LL.B.	1966
Stanford University, B.A.	1963

HONORS AND AWARDS

U.C. Hastings Law Alumni Board of Governors	2020
Stanford Associates, elected to membership in recognition of exceptional and sustained volunteer service to the university	2018
Alumni of the Year, Burlingame High School Alumni Association	2015
Lifetime Achievement Award, Santa Clara County Trial Lawyers Association	2010
Awarded the Degree of Honorary Doctor of Laws, Lincoln Law School	2009
Trial Judge of the Year, Santa Clara County Trial Lawyers Association	2002
Martindale-Hubbell, A.V. Rating	1984

DISPUTE RESOLUTION TRAINING

San Francisco Superior Court Settlement Conference Officer Training
United States District Court, Northern District of California: Training for Early Neutral Evaluators and Mediators (33 hours)
American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution Arbitration Institute (Philadelphia) and Advanced Mediation and Advocacy Skills Institute (Houston) (24 hours)
Arbitrator Certificate Training by Ron Kelly, Bar Association of San Francisco (20 hours)
“Negotiating Mastery”, “Critical Communication Skills in Negotiation”, “Effective Non-Verbal Communication”, Stanford University (18 hours)
“Mediating the Litigated Case”, Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution (45 hours)
“Introduction to Mediation in the Business Setting”, Harvard Law School (20 hours)
“Mediation: A Skills Based Program”, CJER (40 hours)

BAR ADMISSIONS

Judge Nichols is admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of the United States of America, 1973; United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, 1967; United States District Court for the Northern District of California, 1967; and Supreme Court of the State of California, 1967.

TEACHING

Judge Nichols taught law at Lincoln Law School of San Jose from 1971 to 1976 and was named Outstanding Instructor of the Year during his tenure. He also teaches for the California Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER) and for the Continuing Education of the Bar (CEB).

Judge Nichols regularly judges moot court competitions at various Bay Area law schools, in addition to presiding over high school mock trials in programs sponsored by the California Department of Education, the State Bar of California, and the Santa Clara County Bar Association.